Iowa Weather News

National Weather Service, Des Moines, Iowa *October 2003*

Iowa Drought Continues

September Rains Do Little to Improve Drought

Little or no rainfall fell over Iowa in late September and early October. The end of the growing season means far less water demand from crops and vegetation so that drought indices are declining much more slowly than earlier in the season. One impact of the drought has been reduced harvest numbers for soybeans, with preliminary yield estimates down 25 to 30 percent from 2002, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Climatological Summary

September rainfall was highly varied across Iowa with above normal rainfall in several southeast counties but with well below normal amounts in much of central and southwest Iowa. Amounts ranged from a low of 1.09 inches at Northwood to a high of 5.3 inches in Bloomfield. At the National Weather Service (NWS) office in Johnston, September rainfall was 2.15 inches, which is only about two-thirds of normal. After near normal spring and early summer rainfall, the summer of 2003 turned dry after about July 10. August was the driest on record statewide with an average of 0.96 inches, breaking the previous August record of 1.04 inches set in 1984. Overall summer rainfall (June through August) was only near 50 percent of normal across southern and northeast Iowa and near 65 percent of normal in central Iowa.

U.S. Drought Monitor

The *U.S. Drought Monitor* is a weekly collaborative publication effort between a number of federal agencies, including NOAA/NWS, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Drought Mitigation Center. The October 7th Drought Monitor shows little change in recent weeks with a continuation of extreme drought.

(D3 Category) over portions of southwest and south central Iowa. Severe drought (D2 Category) covers nearly the remainder of Iowa with only a small area of moderate drought (D1 Category).

Palmer Drought Severity

The Palmer Drought Severity Index is one of the oldest and most widely used measures for assessing meteorological drought in the U.S. It has been calculated for over 100 years and allows for long-term drought comparisons. The October index maintains southwest and south central Iowa in the severe drought category. North central and northeast have declined to the moderate category.

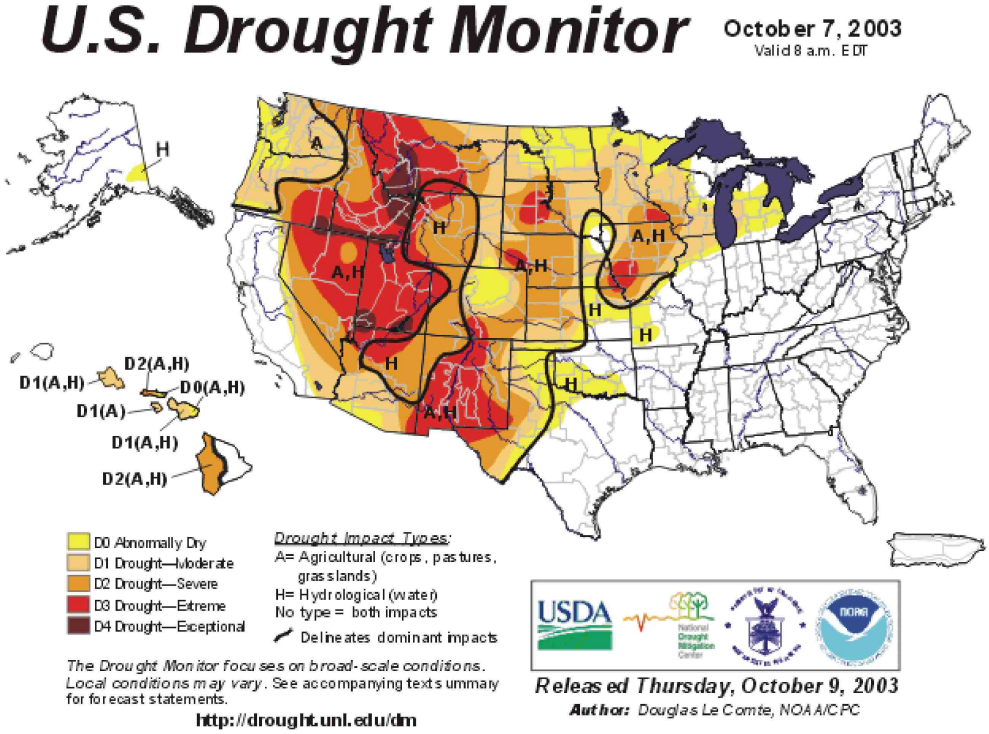
Soil Moisture Conditions

Soil Moisture Conditions as monitored by the Climate Prediction Center and the Midwest Regional Climate Center show well below normal levels across Iowa. The calculated soil moisture anomaly ranks in the 10th to 20th percentile of long term soil moisture values.

River and Streamflow Conditions

River and stream levels continue to slowly decline this fall. Most rivers and streams are now flowing below the 25th percentile of all flows for the date with some below the 10th percentile. Some streams and rivers remain below protected flow levels established by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. This may trigger usage restrictions on these streams.

Product News



Several enhancements were or will be done this fall to National Weather Service (NWS) products. Here is a summary of the changes:

Zone Forecasts

1. The new name is ZONE FORECASTS FOR CENTRAL IOWA.
2. Day four through day seven 24 hour forecasts were broken into 12-hour segments resulting in a seamless 13 or 14 forecast period depending on the issuance time.
3. The routine issuance time is 4:00 a.m. instead of 4:15 a.m.. The 4:00 p.m. issuance remains the same.
4. Wind forecasts were extended to 60 hours.

Air Quality Advisories

The NWS in Des Moines will disseminate Air Quality Advisories issued by DNR.

Area Forecast Matrix

The Area Forecast Matrix (AFM) displays various forecasted weather parameters for forecast areas specified in the Zone Forecasts for Central Iowa. The tabular product displays forecast weather parameters at 3, 6 and 12 hour intervals for the next 7 days. The AFM allows for rapid visual scanning of a large number of forecast parameters. The forecast data is in a format suitable for automated computer retrieval. The AFM replaced the Digital Zone Forecasts.

Point Forecast Matrix

The Point Forecast Matrix (PFM) is like the AFM except it is for specific points. The points used are the same points used in the Coded Cities Forecast.

Hazardous Weather Outlook-

The Hazardous Weather Outlook (HWO) will become a segmented product in December. Currently, the HWO is issued for all 51 Des Moines NWS's counties. Starting in December, the HWO will be segmented based on the hazard of the day.

National Digital Forecast Database-

Beginning in late 2003, NWS will have available a limited number of forecast grids of sensible weather elements (e.g., cloud cover, maximum temperature, etc) in the National Digital Forecast Database (NDFD) . In addition, a few national graphics produced from these grids will be available, such as temperature and probability of precipitation. The NDFD contains a seamless mosaic of NWS digital forecasts from NWS field offices working in collaboration with NWS National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP). The database will be made available to all customers and partners–public and private– and will allow those customers and partners to create a wide range of text, graphic, and image products of their own. For detailed information, refer to the following web site:

http://www.nws.noaa.gov/ndfd

Winter Weather Awareness Week
November 3-7, 2003

The National Weather Service and the Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management have declared November 3 through November 7, 2003, as Winter Weather Awareness Week in Iowa. Each year Winter Weather Awareness Week is held to remind Iowans that the winter weather season is rapidly approaching.

Topics for Winter Weather Awareness Week are:
Monday - National Weather Service winter weather products
Tuesday - Blizzards and winter storms
Wednesday - Extreme cold and wind chill
Thursday - Winter weather preparedness in the home and car
Friday - How to get winter weather information

Attention Media:

For downloadable winter weather safety Public Service Announcements, go to the National Weather Service web site at http://www.crh.noaa.gov/dmx. The messages are 30 and 60 seconds in length.

For Winter Weather Awareness Week to be successful, media coverage is vital. Interviews, special programming and news articles are encouraged. Contact Jeff Johnson, National Weather Service, to schedule an interview at 515-270-4501, ext. 726.

Iowa Weather News is a publication of the National Weather Service in Des Moines, Iowa. If you have comments or suggestions, please contact:

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